Interview originally published in Neppu Magazine July 2025 issue/Machine TL

“Yamato” appeared suddenly without precedent.

Editorial Department (hereinafter, ---):
“Space Battleship Yamato” will celebrate its 50th anniversary on October 6, 2024, and various commemorative events are being held.
We would like to hear about Mr. Anno's personal feelings toward “Yamato,” as he is also the director of the anniversary project.

Anno Hideaki (hereinafter, Anno):
I think it has been talked a lot already.

[Interview conducted by Hikawa Ryusuke, a leading expert on *Yamato* and an anime and tokusatsu researcher.]

Hikawa Ryusuke (hereinafter, Hikawa):
I know this has been discussed many times before, but could you please start from your initial experience with *Yamato*?

Anno:
My first encounter with *Yamato* wasn’t through TV, but rather through seeing the manga in a used bookstore.

Hikawa:
The article in *Shonen Sunday* (Shogakukan), right?

Anno:
Yes. On my way home from cram school, I happened to stop by a used bookstore and found the previous issue of *Sunday*.
The front page had a two-color special feature - an illustration of *Yamato*'s third bridge and the ship's interior factory.

Hikawa:
They printed the setting as it was, didn't they?

Anno:
The moment I opened the page, I immediately recognized it as Matsumoto Leiji’s artwork (the setting was written by Kato Naoyuki).
The fact that “Matsumoto Leiji’s artwork was being adapted into a TV manga” was a huge shock.

Later, when I went to my regular bookstore, I found *Adventure King* (Akita Shoten), which featured the first chapter of Matsumoto’s manga *Space Battleship Yamato*.
I thought I couldn’t just read it standing there, so I bought the November issue with my

meager allowance.
After that, I started buying it every month.
I started watching the anime from the second episode.
I watched it on a black-and-white TV that my parents kept because they thought it was a waste to throw away.
If that had been thrown away, we would have only been able to watch *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*, so I wouldn't have been able to watch *Yamato* in real time — and I probably wouldn't be who I am today.
From the moment I saw the opening, it was like I was hooked, as they say today.

Hikawa:
Adventure King had the first episode of the TV series fully adapted into a manga, right?

Anno:
Yes. So, on TV, we could watch the continuation from there, and the timing of the story flowed well. I later got to see the first episode on TV during a rerun when I was in high school.
The first two episodes I watched had the "Warship March" playing during the scene where the battleship *Yamato* appears, but I don't know why.
Was it only in regional areas that they used the "Warship March"?

Hikawa:
At the time, network stations replaced it with another song to avoid criticism of right-wing bias, but local stations in the film network probably used the original version.

Anno:
I had never seen a work like *Yamato* that felt like a "TV manga aimed at adults" before. The fact that I could watch it as a middle school student without feeling embarrassed was a big deal.
Even before that, Tatsunoko (Production) had done some pretty hardcore sci-fi stuff with *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* and *New Human Casshan*, but even in *Casshan*, there were episodes where kids were the guest stars, so I thought, "Oh, there's gonna be kids in it after all." And in *Gatchaman*, Jinpei is a kid, too. So, even if you talk about a realistic ninja team, there's always going to be a kid in the team.
In *(Masked Ninja) Akakage*, Aokage is like that, and in *Ultraman*, there's Hosino-kun.

It’s frustrating when the story is progressing realistically, but then the child does something stupid, gets captured by the monster, and becomes a hostage.

Anno (continued):

All of them are children's programs, so they're the viewers' self-insert.

宇宙戦艦ヤマト
宇宙戦艦ヤマト
October 6, 1974 - March 30, 1975
Planning, Original Concept: Yoshinobu Nishizaki, Eiichi Yamamoto
Director, Setting/Design: Leiji Matsumoto
Screenplay: Keisuke Fujikawa, Maru Tamura, Eiichi Yamamoto
Music: Yasushi Miyagawa
Director of Photography: Noboru Ishiguro
Character Design: Nobuhiro Okasako, Toyoo Ashida
Design Collaboration: Studio Nue
Producer: Yoshinobu Nishizaki
26 episodes
In the year 2199, humanity was on the brink of extinction. The Earth's surface was contaminated with radiation due to attacks by the mysterious planet Gamilas, which was plotting to invade Earth. Amidst this situation, information about the Cosmo Cleaner D, a radiation removal device, was brought from the planet Iscandar. Based on the design drawings of the wave engine sent along with the message, humanity rebuilt the battleship Yamato, which had been used in World War II, into a space battleship to receive the Cosmo Cleaner D. The Yamato set off on a journey to Iscandar to receive the Cosmo Cleaner D.
Based on the design plans for the wave engine sent along with the message,
humankind rebuilt the battleship “Yamato” from World War II into a space battleship and set off for Iscandar to retrieve the Cosmo Cleaner D. With only one year left before humanity's extinction, they embarked on a journey spanning 296,000 light-years round trip.
©Tohoku Shinsha/Copyright Supervision: Nishizaki Akira
October 6, 1974 - March 30, 1975

Anno: I guess they had to include at least one child who could understand that. But in ´´ *Yamato*, the only children are Jiro (Shima Daisuke's younger brother) and Aiko, the granddaughter of Tokugawa Kikancho — and basically only young adults and adults appear.

That realistic feel, where you wouldn't be embarrassed to recommend it to your classmates, was great. I was also drawn in by *Yamato*'s innovative and cool design, its grand worldview, and its sense of wonder in the style of science fiction.

Additionally, the detailed depictions of *Yamato*'s mecha and the various obsessive descriptions were something I had never seen before. The fact that I had never seen anything like it before was the same shock I felt when I watched *Ultraman*, so I think it was an epoch-making moment.

Yamato also feels like it suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

(Mobile Suit) Gundam began as a giant robot series following the epoch of *Tetsujin 28-go (Iron Man 28)*, and then evolved into the next epoch with *Mazinger Z*, which transformed giant robots into piloted mecha.

This trend continued with *Chōdenji Robo Combattler V* and *Zambot 3*, which emerged ahead of the trend toward realism.

Getter Robo is also an epoch-making work in its own right, but *Gundam* is the one that truly defined an era in the broader cultural landscape.

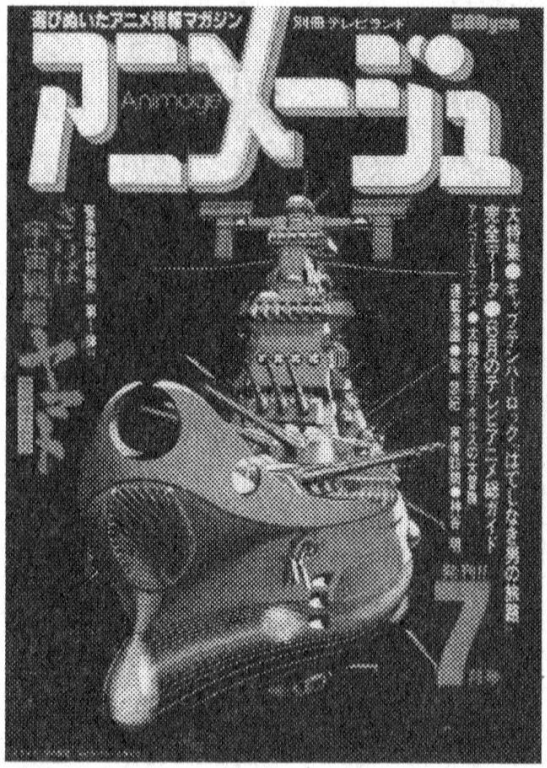
Hikawa: All of them are breaking new ground, but in the case of *Yamato*, it truly started from scratch.

Anno: *Yamato* feels like it was born suddenly from nothing. There were war stories like *Ketsudan* and *Zero-sen Hayato* before it, but there was no work that conceptually placed a war story in space.
Yamato was so sudden that it's essentially a one-off. It is composed of elements or foundations that cannot be decomposed.
So even if you try to reconstruct it, it can only become the same *Yamato* again. Unlike *Gundam*, which has various expansions of its world, *Yamato* couldn't do that — it could only connect the stories of a continuous world as a series.
There was also Producer Nishizaki's firm worldview of *Yamato*, and his passionate feelings for the ship itself. That's why I think *Yamato* is a special anime.
Yamato is the origin of the ongoing anime boom, and it undoubtedly had a great impact on the animation industry, becoming a major business pillar.
Realistically speaking, if *Space Battleship Yamato* hadn't appeared at that stage, the history of animation would have been completely different — a totally different timeline.

Hikawa: It might have continued in a childish manner.

Anno: Yes. I think anime targeted at teenagers wouldn't have been made for a while. Of course, without *Yamato*, there would be no *Gundam* or *Evangelion*.
I think it's perfectly fine to divide Japanese animation, including the term “animation,” into *before Yamato* and *after Yamato*.
Anime magazines also originated with *Yamato*. Without *Yamato*, there would be no *Animage* (Tokuma Shoten).

—The cover of the first issue of *Animage* featured *Farewell to Space Battleship Yamato*.



[Animage] First issue Cover.
Launched on May 26, 1978,
by Tokuma Shoten,
this is a monthly anime magazine.
The TV Land special edition,
“Romance Album: Space Battleship
Yamato,” which quickly caught on
to the “Yamato” boom, was a huge
hit, selling 400,000 copies, which
led to the launch of this magazine.

Hikawa: Then there would be no Studio Ghibli either.

Anno: Without *Animage*, there would be no Studio Ghibli. If *Animage* had not been launched, Suzuki (Toshio) would have remained an editor at *Television Land* or *Asahi Geino* (Tokuma Shoten).

However, since there were special effects works like *Godzilla* and *Ultraman*, *Fantastic Collection (Fancole)* (Asahi Sonorama) might have remained.

Hikawa: It might have shifted toward special effects.

Anno: However, since *Yamato* became a huge hit, I think special effects became even less popular.
After *Mazinger Z* took the spotlight away from heroes and robots, the image of a so-called all-purpose battleship was supposed to be the specialty of *tokusatsu*, but *Yamato* also depicted that.
Until then, when it came to mecha, it was *tokusatsu*, not anime — with things like *Ultra Hawk*, *ITC Mecha*, *Mighty Jack*, and Toho *tokusatsu* mecha — but *Yamato*'s maniacal mecha depictions seem to have rewritten that.
Yamato was amazing not only for its storytelling, but also for the presence of its mecha. At the time, the level of detail in the mecha designs was incredible. When I tried to copy them myself, I was surprised to see how many lines were required.
Even just copying them took a lot of time. That alone made it completely different.

Hikawa: That's right.

Anno: Replacing *tokusatsu*-style mecha with anime-style mecha — where mecha and characters are tailored for both teenagers and adults — that's one of the great achievements of *Yamato*.

In a way, it made animation versatile. They completely redesigned the mecha and characters for both teenagers and adults.

Also, while *Yamato* was produced by a studio affiliated with Mushi Production, the fact that they created a studio specifically for *Yamato* is also new.

—That's Nishizaki Yoshio's Office Academy, right? —Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Hikawa: The production studio wasn't fixed either; it was set up specifically for *Yamato*, and after it ended, it dissolved — so it was a project-based system for future original works.

Anno: I think it was great that it was a project-based system. *Yamato* was created without the constraints of a production studio.

The fact that *Heidi* was also produced around the same time is another amazing aspect of Japanese animation.

Hikawa: That's right. It was intertwined with Tsuburaya Productions' *SF Drama: The Monkey Army*.

Anno: I didn't realize it at the time, but *Heidi* had incredible artistic merit. The collaboration between Takahata (Isao) and Miyazaki (Hayao) to create a TV series was groundbreaking.
When I watch it again now, I can see that it was a work that undoubtedly changed Japanese animation.
Maintaining that level of quality every week for a TV series that had to be broadcast weekly — including the system behind it — is remarkable.

Hikawa: That's right. At the time, it was common for each episode to have a different style, but this one maintained a consistent quality throughout.

Anno: The fact that such high quality was maintained every week for a year, and that the subsequent *Three Thousand Miles in Search of Mother* was similarly — if not even higher — in quality, was something anyone familiar with animation would notice.

If I had control over the channel, I would have watched *Samurai Giants*, which had character designs resembling *Lupin III*, instead of *Heidi*.

Hikawa: The show before *Yamato* (laughs).

Anno: Yes. If I had watched the final episode of *Samurai Giants*, I would have definitely watched the preview for *Yamato* as well, and I would have been surprised and started watching *Yamato* from the first episode.
But since I didn't have control over the channel, during the first episode, I watched *Heidi* on the other channel with my family.
But while the rest of the family was watching *Heidi* on the color TV, I started watching *Yamato* from the second episode on the 18-inch black-and-white TV that no one else was using.
Then my dad seemed to start liking *Yamato* more than *Heidi*, and eventually he bought a second 14-inch color TV for me.

Hikawa: That's amazing. During the original broadcast?

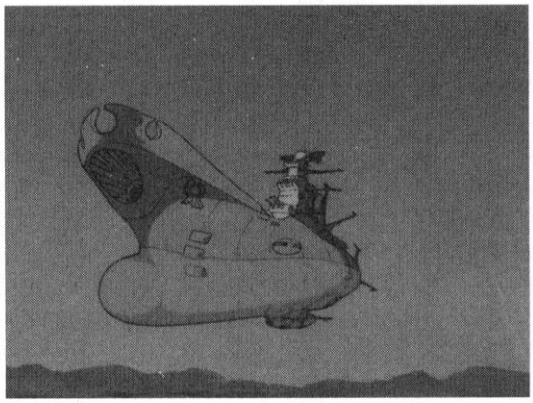
Anno: Yes, during the original broadcast. So I should have started watching in color around
episode 9.
But up until episode 7, it was definitely black and white. The final sinking scene was in black and white.
But speaking of mecha, which part of your memory is the most vivid?

Anno: The opening scene where the camera pulls back from the captain’s room (drawn by Izumi Kaoru) to show the entire ship tilting and moving forward — that really blew me away.

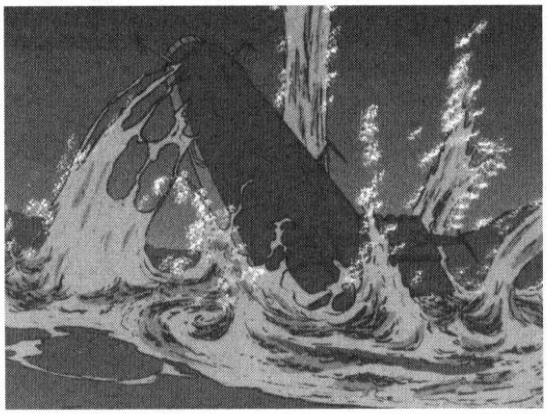
And the scene in episode 2 where Tomonaga Kazuhide drew *Yamato*'s appearance — the music “D-1B” starts and begins to turn.

The fact that it moves was shocking. And the sequence of firing the main gun depicted in such detail — that was something I had never seen in a film before.

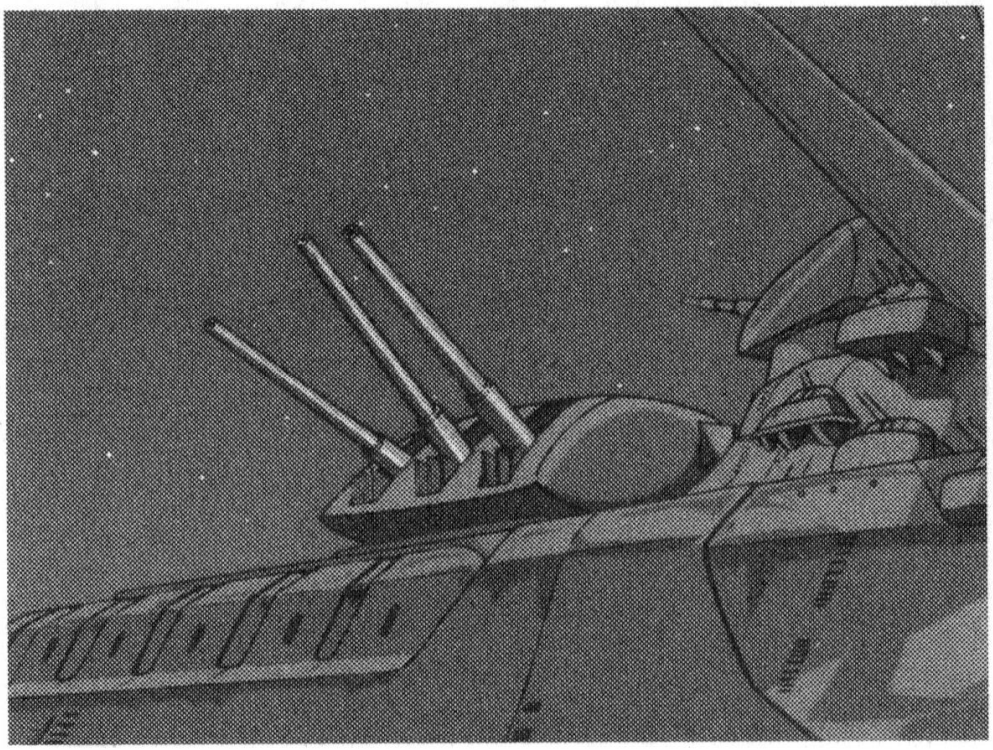
Hikawa: *Yamato* has a thick roll call to aim. Anno and I communicated about the power transmission — "only the bow wave cannon has power."



Yamato drawn by Kazuhide Tomonaga, who has been participating in the original artwork since the second episode. Tomonaga is a renowned animator who has drawn many memorable scenes, including the battle scenes with the Comet City Empire in "Farewell to Space Battleship Yamato," the battle scenes with the Arcadia in the movie version of "Galaxy Express 999," and the opening car chase in "Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro."



From Episode 7. Commander Schultz and his second-in-command Gantz of the Pluto base lure the Yamato into range and attempt to sink it with a reflective satellite cannon. In the final scene, the Yamato sinks with the narration, "Will it repeat its fate of becoming seaweed once again?"



From Episode 2. A scene where the main guns rotate independently and then lock onto their targets before firing. Each turret has three gun barrels that move independently while the turret rotates, aligning all three barrels toward the target. The digital numbers on the instrument panel change with each cut. A scene where the position is determined and fired. Three gun barrels per turret move independently while the turret rotates, and the three barrels are aligned toward the target. The instrument panel with digital numbers is switched between cuts.

Anno:

Descriptions such as “legs” and “oh, some of them can't shoot” were not in the script,

so I think Mr. Matsumoto added them when he was drawing the storyboards.
I was impressed by Mr. Matsumoto's realism regarding the mecha.

Also, the precision with which the main guns rotate while moving their barrels separately,
and the way the numbers on the instruments align —
with the third turret being the only one whose numbers don't align at first — those kinds of details.

Hikawa:
"It's the same as training. Don't panic," and Captain Okita responds.

Anno:
Yes. Also, the detailed depiction of wiping sweat while aiming gave it a professional feel.
Kodai is wearing white gloves, and white gloves evoke the image of a working driver,
so those kinds of details really impressed me in Episode 2.

Episode 3 is also good — with the suspense of the enemy missile approaching and the procedures for activating the wave engine.
The warp in Episode 4 was also good,
but I was really looking forward to the wave cannon in Episode 5.

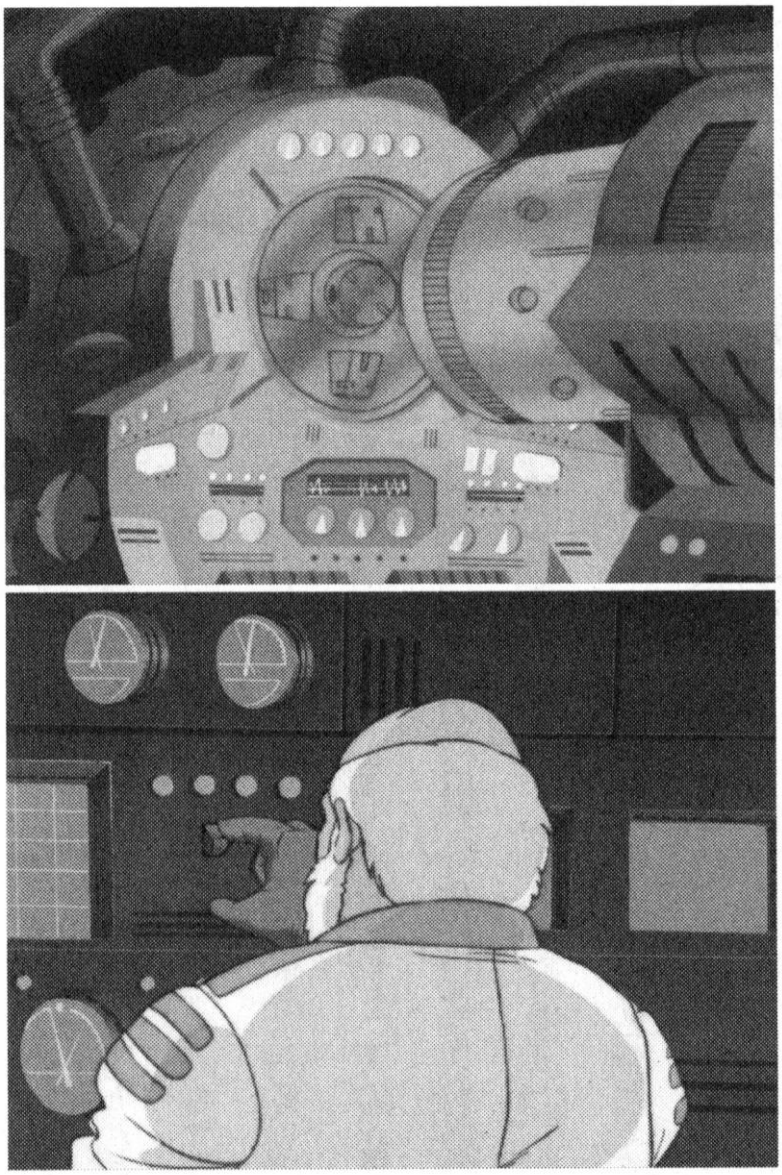
The wave cannon takes about two minutes and forty seconds from the start of firing preparations,
which is roughly the time it takes for the color timer to start ringing in *Ultraman*.
The fact that they spent one-tenth of a 20-minute anime on the wave cannon firing sequence was impressive.

Hikawa:
Turning off the lights inside the ship to divert power to the wave cannon.

Anno:
Using a toggle switch to turn the power on and off, and the pressure increase is also done like this (gestures turning a valve).

Hikawa:
Like a boiler room (laughs).

Anno:
Even though it's the future, using physical switches gives it a grounded feel, which was great.
The depiction of the engine room up to the start of the Wave Engine in Episode 5 was also impressive.



[Top] From Episode 5. The first scene showing the use of the wave cannon.
It blows up the floating continent of Jupiter along with the Gamilas base where the planet bomb is located,
but the destructive power exceeds imagination,
and after firing, there is no sense of exhilaration. [Bottom]
Many of the switches are toggle switches that switch electrical circuit contacts by lever operation.
Meters and other instruments were mostly analog.

Hikawa:
The description of the engine room with the flywheel spinning?

Anno:
Yes, the sequence where the auxiliary engine's flywheel spins first,
then connects to the main engine and starts spinning — that was very well done.
I was thrilled by terms like "igniter insertion" and "clamping plate lock release."

The clamping plate is like a clutch, right?
Even though it's a superluminal spaceship engine, it has a clutch —
and I was thrilled by the small details like that.

Of course, *Yamato* also has great human drama.
I was really moved by Episode 10.

The scene between Kodai and Okita in Episode 3 was also great,
but the human drama was really concentrated in Episode 10.
It was also surprising that there were no battle scenes.
I was really moved by Tokugawa and Sado.

Well, they're both played by the same person, though.

Hikawa:
The voice actor (Ichiro Nagai) (laughs).

Anno:
Yes. They're the same person,
but that performance — especially Tokugawa's — was great.
The way he said "still" in "I still have more to say" was very convincing.

And Sado's "The universe is vast" — but at the time,
I didn't notice that they were the same voice actor.

One day, I suddenly realized, "Wait, these two are the same person."

Hikawa:
I heard they made it a dual role because they didn't appear in the same scene,
but they ended up appearing together toward the end, didn't they?

Anno:
They're together in Episode 11 and Episode 25 (laughs).
Maybe they recorded them separately.

Hikawa:
That's right.
During the voice recording session for Episode 25, I witnessed them recording only the line:
"You fool!"

Anno:
That was as impactful as realizing that Boyacky (from *Time Bokan*'s *Yatterman*) and Ban Chuta (from *The Giant Star*) were voiced by the same person.

Hikawa:
Is the impression of the voice actors why you recorded it on cassette tape?

Anno:
Yes, I started recording the dialogue from Episode 5 onwards.

Hikawa:
Did you use a cable?

Anno:
No, it was a cassette recorder with an antenna that could record TV audio.

Hikawa:
That's amazing. High-tech, isn't it?

Anno:
It was the latest model from Sony at the time.
At first, I tried to record with headphones,
but then I couldn't hear the TV sound, so that didn't work.

So, I told my parents I wanted to study English and had them buy me the radio cassette player.

Hikawa:
That's the standard excuse back then. I did the same (laughs).

Anno:
What I was listening to wasn't English,
but rather the sounds and dialogue from *Yamato*,
but in the end, I feel like it was more useful for my current work than English.

I learned a lot from the sounds of *Yamato*.
I can now write scripts using technical terms without stress.

Hikawa:
And the timing of music and effects.

Anno:
Those things have really stuck with me.
I think Mr. Tadashi's (sound director) work has really seeped into my sense of sound.

Hikawa:
He does amazing work even when there's no time for dubbing or voice recording
because the visuals aren't ready.

Anno:
The way he uses background music and sound effects —
I first became conscious of that through repeated listening to *Yamato*.

Hikawa:
The part with the planetary bombs, for example,
is a flashy scene, but using a completely different female scat was unique.

Anno:
Including such unconventional uses of music —
masterpieces often have excellent music and sound effects as well.

Hikawa: What do you think of Miyakawa Yasushi's music?

Anno: It was really good, wasn't it?
But when the LP came out, I bought it right away with the money I had saved up, believing it was the soundtrack — never imagining it would be the drama version.

I remember being shocked when I got home and put the needle on the record, thinking, "I thought it was just the music — but it wasn't!"

It took a long time for the original soundtrack album to be released, but when it finally came out, I was truly delighted.

I heard later that Nishizaki didn't want to release the monaural version, insisting the music should be in stereo, so he had been reluctant to release it for a long time.

Hikawa: It seems he wanted to provide the best possible sound quality out of a sense of service.

Anno: The *Symphonic Suite* is also good, but personally, I wanted to hear the *TV version* rather than the stereo version.

Hikawa: It was heavily rearranged, after all.

Anno: But it was good that King Records later started the *Original Soundtrack* series.

Hikawa: For *Mobile Suit Gundam*?

Anno: *Gundam* too, but really it was the earlier *Ultra Monster Encyclopedia*. That one also had the program's sound included at first — and it wasn't right.

Hikawa: Right. It was drama-centric, with the BGM just tacked on as an afterthought.

Anno: At the time, I was disappointed — I wanted to listen to the music more than the drama.

But I think there were many others who felt the same way, so I think *Yamato* was probably the first to realize that soundtrack music could be a business.

Hikawa: Right. The idea that instrumental music alone could sell was still hard to believe back then.

Anno: That's right. When it came to anime albums, it was all about the songs. A generation that wanted the *soundtrack music itself*, not insert songs or image songs, had emerged.

The music I listened to until high school was mostly theme songs and soundtracks from TV shows and movies I watched, or *enka* and *kayōkyoku* songs my family listened to on TV or radio.

Then there were the folk songs my middle school friends lent me. I read somewhere that a person's musical sensibilities are determined by the music they listen to before the age of 14.

So my favorite music is mainly soundtrack music, *enka*, folk songs, and anime and *tokusatsu* songs.

After high school, I listened to various Japanese music from the 80s and 90s that I liked. Since the band members are around the same age, we've been listening to *Crazy Ken Band* for the past 20 years or so.

But my main focus has always been on anime and *tokusatsu* songs, soundtrack music, and old *enka* and pop songs. Even at 55, I can't seem to let go of these.

Among them, soundtrack music is especially dear to me because it evokes memories of the visuals and emotions from when I first watched them.

Basically, it's made of dreams.

Hikawa: *Yamato* has elements of World War II projected into it, right? How did you feel about the military elements?

Anno: Information about World War II and the Pacific War was abundant when we were children — with special features on the *Yamato* and *Zero* fighters in the opening pages of boys' magazines. War movies were also frequently broadcast on TV.

Hikawa: That's right. For us, the battleship *Yamato* and the *Zero* fighter were like superweapons.

Anno: When we were kids, all the adults around us were war veterans, and some had actually been to the battlefield.

My parents didn't go to war because it ended before they could, so they didn't know the battlefield, but the teachers at our elementary and middle schools, and the elderly people in the neighborhood, were all war veterans.

There were also wounded soldiers. When I was born, it had only been 15 years since the war ended.

Hikawa: That's right.

Anno: Society was still reeling from the prewar and wartime periods, so the lingering scent of war was still present.

The image of "Yamato" in kanji was still very much alive. There was also a plan for a warship monster called *Yamaton* in *Ultraman*, and *Iron Rocks* appeared in *Ultra Seven*.

I think it's a difficult theme now, but back then, war was a given.

The reincarnation of the battleship *Yamato* as the *Space Battleship Yamato* is written in the comic as Okita's line.

Hikawa: I used to hate it when adults said "*Battleship Yamato*" instead of "*Space Battleship Yamato*."

Anno: Even if I said, "It's *space*," they wouldn't listen (laughs). From the parents' perspective, it was just *the* battleship *Yamato*.
I think there were a lot of people back then, including children, who thought the *Yamato* and *Zero* fighter were special.

Hikawa: In terms of the story, the battles escalate more and more in the latter half. How did you feel about that?

Anno: I was completely engrossed in watching it. The story is simple.

Yamato is one of the correct uses of a warship. A ship's original purpose is to go somewhere, complete its mission, and return — or to transport something to a certain location.

A battleship is a ship whose purpose is to bring cannons to where they are needed.

Yamato is a ship that uses its cannons to protect itself while traveling at the speed of light to retrieve a device to save Earth — and it has to return within the deadline.

That's a very clear and straightforward main story, which was great.

What's strange is the setting where Iscandar and Gamilas are twin planets — they mention that as early as Episode 2.

They just blurt out such a huge spoiler right at the start.

Hikawa: Yeah, it's in the ending every time (laughs).

Anno: Right. It's in the ending as early as Episode 1. This is the planet where Starsha was, and this is the Gamilas side — as shown in the artwork.
It's pretty bold to reveal such a huge spoiler so early on.

When you think about the structure, having the final destination and the final boss in the same place is good. It simplifies the plot.

Having the place where you receive the gift *and* the final boss's location be the same makes it easier to depict the climax.

Still — revealing the spoiler at the beginning (laughs).

It's as intense as the opening title of *La Seine no Hoshi*.

In *Space Battleship Yamato 21SS*, when they reached the Large Magellanic Cloud, I made it so that the crew and the audience would say, "Eh?" at the same time,

but unfortunately, most of the viewers already knew about it, so it didn't have much effect on anyone who hadn't seen *21SS* and was watching for the first time.

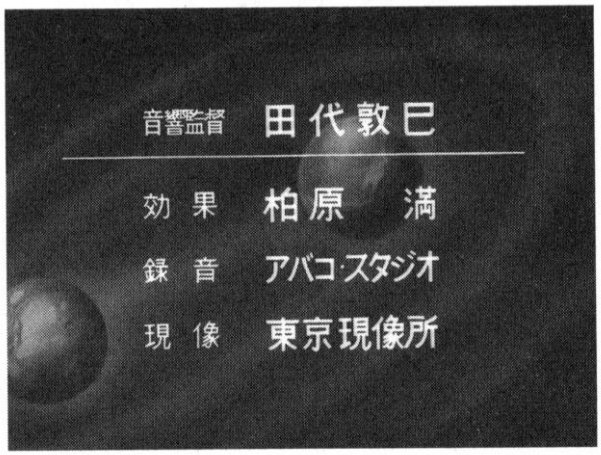
Considering the reality of a single ship traveling to a distant location while fighting, it's quite difficult — so it's all about *romance*.

Yamato is basically made of dreams. Overall, it's a grand dream story — a fable.

But the special effects give you the illusion that it might actually exist, and that's what makes it so good.

Even when you know it's special effects with miniatures, there are rare moments that make you think, "Wait, is this live-action?"

That's the beauty of it — and I think *Yamato* has a similar feel.



The ending credits roll with Isao Sasaki singing "True Red Scarf." From the first episode, the grand spoiler that Iscandar and Gamilas are twin planets is revealed.

Hikawa: The fact that it's almost a closed space until you reach your destination is also one of the ship's good points, I think. We depicted everyday things like eating, arguing, and playing shogi.

Anno: You can also depict everyday life inside the ship. That's because the ship's interior is well-designed.

However, the vastness of the interior isn't realistic.

Hikawa: That's a lie, isn't it? (laughs)

Anno: The side observation room of the party venue was too huge. The ship's factory and hangar are also larger than *Yamato*'s hull, right? The assembled *Cosmo Cleaner D* is also too big, I think (laughs).

Also, since we're going to retrieve it, there should be a designated space for it, right? But how were they planning to handle something whose size is unknown? (laughs)

Hikawa: Those vague details are still part of the "TV manga era," I suppose. *Gundam* is the same, isn't it? It's "half TV manga."

Anno: The first *Gundam* is good because it incorporates various elements from previous giant robot works. That perfect balance.

I think it became too military-oriented and rigid as a realistic robot series starting with *Z* (*Mobile Suit Z Gundam*), but I feel like the appeal of *Gundam* was halved for me because it became too fixated on realism.

So, the Hong Kong *Psycho Gundam* was good.

Hikawa: *Yamato* also had some of those elements here and there.

Anno: Yeah, there are still some casual elements left here and there — and they're still there in the final *Conclusion* episode.

But starting with *Yamato III*, *Gundam* kind of took over.

Hikawa: Is that why *Yamato* ceased to be mainstream?

Anno: Yes. Up until then, *Yamato* had been heading in a fairly realistic direction as an anime, but when measured by the barometer of realism, *Gundam* felt superior.

I think that's why the enthusiasm for *Yamato* among fans cooled off. People who originally liked *Yamato* gradually moved on to *Gundam*.

I also went that way. After all, the first *Gundam* was a combination of *Yamato* and *Mazinger Z*.

The SF worldview was new, and it had the strengths and hit elements of both, so it was interesting.

That said, even though I was drawn to *Gundam*, I watched *Yamato III*, *The Final Chapter*, and *The Resurrection Chapter* in real time.

I just can't help but watch *Yamato* — because I love it.

Anno:
There was no opening.

Hikawa:
Speaking of when it was broadcast — *Yamato* was serialized in *Adventure King*, but it was completely original, right? How was that?

Anno:
The story in *Adventure King* couldn't keep up with the TV series, so from the third episode onward, it became a follow-up.

Hikawa:
Exactly. From the middle onward, the TV version completely overtook the serialized version.
So every week, completely unknown elements and stories would appear.

Anno:
There were no previews either.
So every week, I looked forward to seeing what would happen next.

Hikawa:
How long did you think it would last?

Anno:
Back then, most shows were four-season series,
so I thought it would last about a year.
I didn't expect it to end in six months.

Hikawa:
So it was like suddenly seeing "End" in the TV guide?

Anno:
Yeah, I was like, "Wait — the final episode?"
But *The Monkey Army* on the other channel also ended after six months.

Hikawa:
The TV version of *Japan Sinks* also ended at the same time, right?

Anno:
Yeah, *Japan Sinks* also ended after six months,
so I was like, "Oh, they're all ending at the same time" (laughs).

Hikawa:
That's right.
The October series at that time — *Kamen Rider Amazon* and *Hurricane Polymer* — were also just two-cour series.

Anno:
In 1974, there were only two-cour series.
Also, I was surprised when I watched *Yamato* in real time that there was no opening in the second episode.

Hikawa:
That's right.
They skipped it and went straight to the "previous episode recap."

Anno:
I had always assumed that there was an opening, so it was a shock.

There was no opening in the final episode (Episode 26) either.

Hikawa:
In Episode 26, they suddenly started assembling the Cosmo Cleaner D.

Anno:
Episode 22 was fine because the title appeared at the beginning.
But in the final episode, the Cosmo Cleaner appears only at the *very end* of the assembly sequence.

That coolness still gives me chills.
It's okay to skip the opening.

Hikawa:
Many late-night anime series nowadays don't have openings in the first episode.
Is this the origin of that trend?

Anno:
I suppose so.
Sometimes they cut the opening to adjust the length of the main story,
but in the first episode, there might be cases where the opening footage doesn't fit.

In *Yamato*, the final episode doesn't even have an ending.
It's just text and sound effects — no dialogue, no songs.

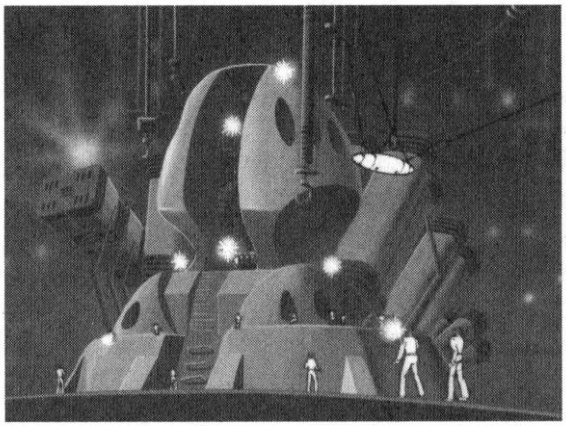
That was innovative and cool,
and the adult, stoic direction was really great.

I heard later that the station scolded them for it.

Hikawa:
Is that so? (laughs)
The broadcast station said, "Follow the format."

Anno:
That's right. (laughs)

Hikawa:
Indeed, back then, if you did something like that,
the TV station would get calls saying, "That's unacceptable!"
But it was all special in its own way.



In episode 25, it appears as parts before assembly, and in episode 26, it appears as the radioactive waste disposal device (Cosmo Cleaner D). It is a device received from Star Sha on the planet Iscandar, and was assembled inside the Yamato. Depending on how it is used, it can turn the air into highly toxic oxygen-depleted air, which almost took the life of Morino Yuki at one point.

The Loss of Yamato

Hikawa: After *Yamato* ended, what did Anno-san do?

Anno: I felt a great sense of loss after *Yamato* ended, so I think I was chasing after something like *Yamato*. I was constantly copying *Yamato*, and I also collected Matsumoto-sensei's manga.

When I was in high school, I made *dōjinshi* with my friends and joined a fan club in Tokyo. That's how I expanded my horizons.

Hikawa: So you expanded your interests that way.

Anno: I also bought *Bluebacks* books without really understanding them and studied relativity theory. I started reading a wide range of science fiction novels as well — also influenced by my friends at the time.

Hikawa: Using Kodansha *Bluebacks* to explore the scientific underpinnings of sci-fi was a staple of that era.

Anno: But there were many parts I didn't understand, so I couldn't finish reading them. As soon as equations appeared, I was lost. Skipping them made everything even more incomprehensible.

Even though I was at a science-focused high school, I couldn't understand them. So I ended up buying a few *Bluebacks*, and that was it.

I also started buying books on shipbuilding and military-related topics. I think my interest shifted in that direction because of the influence of *Yamato*.

Hikawa: Were shipbuilding books specialized texts?

Anno: Yes, they were specialized books on how to build ships.

Hikawa: They start with things like the keel and structural design, right?

Anno: Yes. I also bought books on the structure and construction of large ships.

Hikawa: Didn't you make any models?

Anno: I tried to make models, but I couldn't finish them. I didn't have the patience or skill.

Plus, the first *Yamato* model kit I got just didn't feel right.

Hikawa: Yeah, yeah — the third bridge was replaced with a spring box, so I cut it off with pliers (laughs).

Anno: I made something like a *shurushuru* cutter and cut it with an electric wire (laughs).

Hikawa: Was it nichrome wire?

Anno: Yes, I cut it with nichrome wire. I attached plastic sheets to the hull with holes in it, and I made the third bridge out of paper clay, but clay alone couldn't reproduce the fine details.

Also, the overall shape of the ship was different from the one in the anime, so I decided to make it myself.

When I was in 9th grade, I made the hull from scratch, but I couldn't make the main guns, anti-aircraft clusters, or bridge structures. I just couldn't do it. I didn't have the time or energy.

Hikawa: Making the hull is already amazing.

Anno: I managed to make the hull.

Hikawa: With balsa wood?

Anno: No, I made a frame out of plastic sheets and forced them into shape by bending and attaching them. I built it with the same structure as an actual ship.

Hikawa: The sheer number of details on the *Yamato* was impressive — but that ended up being a drawback.

Anno: Yeah. It was impossible for me, both then and now.

So as an adult, I asked Manabe (Masakazu) to make the prototype for me. There are a lot of subtle curves, so it's difficult to make it three-dimensional.

Hikawa: That's true. We can't just modify the *Battleship Yamato*.

Anno: No, we can't. I considered that at first, but...

Hikawa: You did? I see (laughs).

Anno: When I look at it again, it's completely different.

Hikawa: Structurally, there are similar parts, but the shapes are completely different.

Anno: Yes. That said, my love for warships grew, and I got into waterline models thanks to *Yamato*.

I bought books like *Warship Stories* and old military ship guides, and I made plastic models of heavy cruisers and aircraft carriers.

Before that, I was only interested in *Yamato* and *Musashi*, but my interest expanded to carriers, cruisers, and destroyers.

Hikawa: Did that interest later lead to the naming in *Evangelion*?

Anno: Yes. I liked it.

At that time, I bought specialized books to research and think about the names of Japanese military ships, but now you can just look them up online and get instant results — so it's much easier today.

Hikawa: Were those specialized books like catalogs?

Anno: Yes. It's like, "Oh right, there was the *Fuyutsuki*." I didn't remember all the ships.

"I wanted to move Yamato myself"

Anno: Thanks to *Yamato*, I continued watching anime even after becoming a high school student, a college student, and a college dropout. That was the biggest factor.

Before *Yamato*, my classmates were thinking, "Maybe it's time to graduate from TV manga."

In first year of junior high, there were still friends watching *Casshern*, but by second year, the number had drastically decreased.

Hikawa: They were 14 years old, after all.

Anno: When I talked about TV anime with my classmates, the conversation gradually became incompatible.

There were only three people in the whole grade who watched *Yamato* and could talk about it. Still, I was able to keep watching it because it was *Yamato*.

It was a work worthy of what we would now call "missionary work."

As I mentioned earlier, one of the great things about *Yamato* was that it wasn't something boys our age would be embarrassed to watch. It wasn't aimed at children.

I think the pride in the work was a big factor in maintaining that pride when recommending it to others.

Hikawa: That's definitely something I felt as well.

Anno: I think *Ultra Seven*, which Oshii (Mamoru) also watched in real time, was also worthy of that.

There aren't many children in it, and even when there are, Shinichi uses them skillfully, don't you think?

—Shinichi, Episode 142, "The Messenger of Nonmaruto," right?

Anno: It's not as childish as *Ultraman*, and there are several episodes of *Seven* and *Return of Ultraman* that teenagers can watch without embarrassment.

Those aspects are really important.

That said, it's impressive that Oshii-san — who was already an adult at the time — watched children's programs. Even when his acquaintances said, "It's just a robot for kids," he could respond: "No, it's a Mobile Suit."

It's great that it could be recommended not just to middle or high school students — but also to college students.

Another one I recommended to college students was *Zubat*.

Hikawa: *Zubat*?

Anno: *Zubat* isn't something college students would be embarrassed to watch, is it?

Hikawa: The enemies aren't cyborgs or monsters — but criminals and bodyguards.

Anno: The enemies were organized crime groups, which gave it a strange sense of reality.

Plus, children were blown up without hesitation.

They blew up a hut with children inside using propane gas, blew up a child on a boat, and even tried to shoot them.

—It seems that many of the viewers were college students.

Anno: Such depictions would be difficult to portray nowadays.

Nowadays, there are many large-scale cement explosions that are difficult to depict, and the visuals are also flashy and impressive.

I also enjoyed watching the *Time Bokan* series, but I didn't recommend it to others. It was more of a personal preference.

Another one I recommended was *Conan, the Boy in Future*. At the time, just because it was an NHK program, people would watch it.

Hikawa: That's a stamp of approval. Another question I have is about the animation of *Yamato* that you created yourself.

Anno: It's a 5-second film I shot with an 8mm camera when I was in my second year of high school.

Hikawa: It's been quite a while since it was broadcast on TV.

Anno: Yes, it has. From the time I was in second year of high school, we were able to handle cel animation on our own.

I became president of the art club, so I was able to use the art club's budget on my own.

I appealed directly to the student council to increase the cultural festival budget, and I allocated all of it to cel animation.

Theatrical Version of "Yamato"

Hikawa: At that point it would have been about three years since it was broadcast, so it must have been around the time the theatrical version was released.

Anno: That's right. The theatrical version wasn't shown in Ube City, but it was shown at one theater in Shimonoseki, which is a little far away, so I went there to see it.

Hikawa: How was it watching it on the big screen?

Anno: At the time, there was no other way to watch it besides reruns, so being able to see "Yamato" on the big screen was exciting. But personally, I had listened to the soundtrack on tape until it wore out, so honestly, the different music, dialogue, and pacing were distracting and made it hard to enjoy fully. The "Seven-Color Star Cluster" scene, which was mostly unchanged, was fine, though.

Hikawa: The dialogue was significantly altered, wasn't it?

Anno: The part where Kodai says, "We love each other," felt different from my memory. I thought, "No, this performance is different from the TV version." It could be said that it was my own personal noise caused by listening to the TV sound too much and having it stuck in my head, but I couldn't help feeling that it was different. The flow was the same, but the music was slightly different, which also bothered me. Also, the theatrical version of "Yamato" skipped over a lot of the story.

Hikawa: That's right. It's just a series of events.

Anno: The drama parts...

Hikawa: There's none of that (laughs).

Anno: From someone who watched the TV series intently, that theatrical version was a bit tough to watch and didn't really resonate with me. Being able to watch it on the big screen was good, but the opening sequence being set to a black screen was also very disappointing. I thought I'd be able to see it on the big screen, and that was the moment I felt a bit deflated.

Hikawa: Maybe the negative without the superimposed text wasn't found. *(Editor's note: It was discovered last year.)*

Anno: In the past, there were movies that only played music at the beginning, so maybe they were following that tradition. Anyway, my personal expectations for watching it in the theater were very high. I took the first train to Shimonoseki, which is about 40 kilometers away, and waited with a friend in front of the theater entrance. Standing in

line at the theater on the first day of release was also a new experience for me. For me, who was expecting the theatrical version to recreate the excitement of the TV series, the theatrical version felt too much like a digest version, and I couldn't get into it.

Now that I'm on the production side, I feel that editing the story into a two-hour-plus film was amazing—cutting out the unnecessary parts and focusing on the core of the story. I think the greatest achievement of the theatrical version was that, in an era when the public was extremely cold toward TV manga, they distributed it personally and it became a huge hit. The release of that theatrical version demonstrated to the world the existence of the "Yamato" work, its passionate fans, and the fact that animation could become a major business. Without Nishizaki's passion for the theatrical release, "Yamato" might have remained a legend among enthusiasts. I believe the theatrical release was a turning point that changed Japanese animation.

A World Without "Yamato"

Anno: For those of us who watched "Yamato" in real time, I truly believe that without "Yamato," there would be no Japanese animation today. For those who came after, there might be an image that animation exists even without "Yamato," but it's no exaggeration to say that Japanese animation began with "Yamato." As such, I hope that this work is preserved in the history of anime culture.

Hikawa: If you were to write a novel like a fictional war story about how anime would have turned out in a world without "Yamato," you might be able to understand what I mean.

Anno: That's right.

Hikawa: Miyazaki would still be making children's anime, and adult anime would have become more sensual.

Anno: Works like "Heidi" and "Time Bokan" would have remained, and that might have been the end of it. If it had come out later, the key person would have been Yoshiyuki Tomino.

Hikawa: Right after Tomino took on "Brave Raideen," he was asked to be the chief director of "The Little Viking Bikke," so if those roles had been switched, history would have been very different.

Anno: Tomino was anti-"Yamato," so without "Yamato," I don't think he would have created robot shows like "Gundam."

Hikawa: He said "Yamato" was a fictional enemy, right?

Anno: Yes. Instead of creating "Gundam" with the slogan "Defeat Yamato," he might have focused on classic works and toy-based combination robot shows.

Hikawa: What about Oshii?

Anno: Oshii was involved in the "Time Bokan" series and "Nils' Wonderful Journey," but I don't know what happened after that. He might have left the anime industry early on.

Hikawa: Maybe Japanese anime would have become all about classic works.

Anno: That's possible. If the anime boom after "Yamato" hadn't happened in the 80s, I don't know if manga-based works like "Urusei Yatsura" or "Touch" would have been adapted into TV anime either.

Hikawa: How do you think about "Star Wars"?

Anno: "Star Wars" and "Yamato"...

Hikawa: The staff definitely watched it before making it (laughs).

Anno: Without "Yamato," I don't know if "Star Wars" would have existed either. And "Evangelion" definitely wouldn't have. Would I be doing anime?

Hikawa: The theatrical version of "Yamato" was, to put it bluntly, "a bunch of adults sensitive to the smell of money," meaning it showed that it could be a business, and that had a big impact later on.

Anno: That's right. I think "Yamato" was the first to openly show the world that "anime can make money." At the time, even newspapers and weekly magazines were covering it and making a big deal out of it. Whether it's now or back then, the public's interest is in economic impact—or rather, numbers. The same goes for "Gundam," but if it hadn't shown the world through Gundam models that it could still make money even after the TV broadcast ended, animation wouldn't have become as widespread as it is today.

Hikawa: Also, in the theatrical version of "Yamato," the fact that there were postcards and merchandise available at the theater was something that "Yamato" changed significantly.

Anno: I bought all the "Yamato" merchandise, including gum and cards.

Hikawa: During the broadcast?

Anno: Yes, during the broadcast. That was about the only source of information available in the countryside. The cards were especially good.

Hikawa: The mini cards from Hikawa (a candy store product from Amada Printing)?

Anno: Those mini cards, right? Those were rare scene photos at the time. At the time, we hadn't yet reached the point of taking photos of the TV screen with a camera. I found the "Space Battleship Yamato Encyclopedia" at a bookstore on my way home from school during the broadcast and bought it with great joy. It was so informative that I looked at it so many times that the pages fell apart.

That, along with fan magazines, was when the fan community expanded and grew into a nationwide network, starting with "Yamato." Before that, there were fan activities for "(Cyborg) 009," "Triton of the Sea," and tokusatsu, but the proliferation of fanzines, the nationwide spread of anime fans, and their collaboration all started with "Yamato." Additionally, the systematic use of fans for promotional purposes also originated with "Yamato."

Hikawa: Nishizaki had a business sense for that kind of thing.

Anno: Mobilizing all the "Yamato" fan clubs nationwide was amazing. When you bought a doujinshi, it came with a screenshot. It was a monochrome image with scan lines that was hard to make out, but just seeing "Yamato" in it was enough to make us grateful. It was "Yamato" that really expanded fan activities, wasn't it?

Hikawa: It wasn't about being satisfied once the show ended; we made sure it didn't fade away.

Anno: "Yamato" was the first to provide a place where fans could continue to love the work even after the show ended. I also joined a fan club for the first time. I started buying *Quarterly Fantoshu* (a quarterly animation specialty magazine launched in 1975). At the time, *Fantoshu* was the only animation specialty magazine before *Animage* was published.

Hikawa: It also featured photos of "Yamato."

Anno: I also bought *Animation* (a monthly picture book supplement from Subaru Shobo). The explanations of Miyazaki's running style in that magazine—like, "Oh, that's how you draw it"—were really educational. Until then, the only animation books available were things like *Small Films—Animation and Special Effects* (Genkosha, an amateur guidebook for 8mm film), but suddenly there was practical information written in it. It was really educational... though I didn't draw much "running" myself (laughs).

50th Anniversary Event and New Work

Hikawa: I've heard a lot about your experiences 50 years ago, but I'd also like to hear about the 50th anniversary event for *Yamato*. The "Space Battleship Yamato Complete Record Exhibition" will be held in Osaka starting July 19.

Anno: The exhibition we held in Shibuya, Tokyo, in March will be moving to Namba, Osaka, so please look forward to it. There will also be a lot more merchandise available.

Hikawa: Could you tell us a little more about the exhibition?

Anno: Intermediate production materials from anime and tokusatsu works really have a lot of power. That's why ATAC (Anime and Tokusatsu Archive Organization) is planning to preserve them. Especially with *Yamato*, even just looking at one setting sheet, you can see how much detail was put into it and how much thought went into the smallest elements.

When the original artwork, including the quality of the lines, is preserved, you can feel the production process behind it, the thoughts of the creators—it also inspires you to try something like this yourself.

Settings, original artwork, and other intermediate production materials are also exhibited by Studio Ghibli in layout exhibitions and by Disney in image board exhibitions, showcasing the process of creating works. Sharing these with a wide audience is incredibly meaningful and culturally significant.

For *Gundam*, it was great to have Mr. Yasuhiko's original artwork. We were able to publish an art book and hold touring exhibitions. With cels, the lines are traced from the animation, so the beauty of Mr. Yasuhiko's original lines doesn't come through. That's why the original layouts and artwork are so important.

The beauty of the pencil lines in *Yamato* cannot be appreciated through copies. This time, the main focus is on high-resolution scans, but the actual works are also framed and on display. I hope you will take the time to view them. Considering that these works were created 50 years ago, I think it is truly inspiring.

Although there are few three-dimensional objects since it is animation, I believe the exhibition is well-rounded. I hope to continue holding such exhibitions for other works as well.

Hikawa: This time, there are also sound effects that can be played with a button, right?

Anno: Yes.

Hikawa: They are an important legacy of sound effects creator Kashiwabara Mitsuru.

Anno: Including the sound effects that are important when talking about *Yamato*, we are displaying as much of the history of *Yamato* as possible. This 50th anniversary edition has been re-supervised by me and will have new molded colors.

Anno: This time, we're trying to make the molded colors as close as possible to the impression of the original cels and TV screens. The 3D plastic models that had been released before didn't match the *Yamato* I had in mind, so I've been thinking about how to create a 3D model based on the image of *Yamato* shown in the main story and the version drawn by Mr. Matsumoto in his manga.

At an event (the 2001 Japan SF Convention “Future International Conference”), when I met Mr. Matsumoto, I asked him if I could make and exhibit my own 3D model of *Yamato*. He replied, “Why don't you make it yourself?” I received his approval. After that, Mr. Nishizaki also saw it, and both of them gave me the green light.

Hikawa: In a way, this 3D model feels like it embodies everyone’s ideals.

Anno: Yes, that’s right. I think we were able to present a new *Yamato* with a new hull shape that differs from previous plastic models.

Hikawa: Finally, is there anything you can share about the new work you’re currently preparing?

Anno: Well, not yet (laughs). All I can say is that we’re working hard on it.

Hikawa: When will you be able to announce the release date?

Anno: I have no idea yet (laughs). It depends on various factors, and we can’t reveal anything until the visuals are complete.

Hikawa: So, it's still in the same state as when it was announced last year?

Anno: Yes, it is. The production work is progressing steadily across various areas.

I believe that resets and parallels are natural occurrences in works that are not only historical but also have strong content.
For me, the existence of multiple versions of the same work has always been a given since childhood.
While we are following in the footsteps of the history of “Yamato” created by our predecessors, the sense of parallelism where multiple ‘Yamatos’ coexist is, I believe, a continuation of the characteristic flow of “Yamato.”

(Middle omitted)

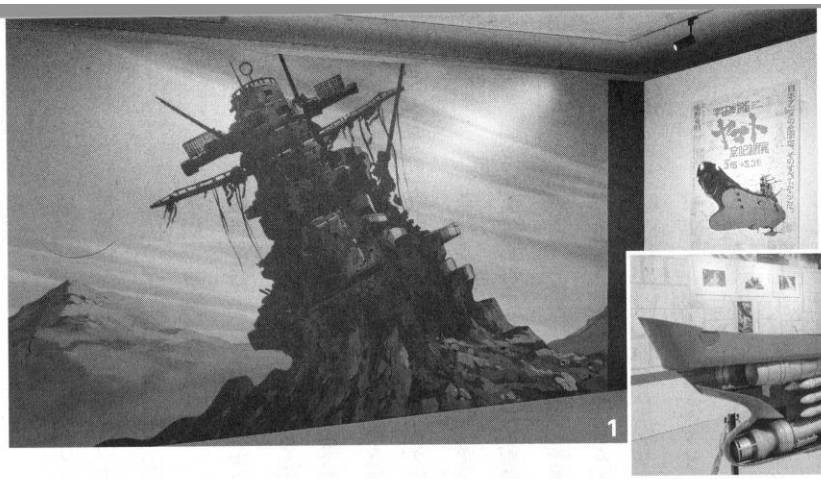
This time, thanks to the kindness of the relevant companies, I have been granted relatively free rights to create a new “Yamato.”
Therefore, rather than aiming for the small goal of fulfilling my middle school dream, I am striving to make the new “Yamato” a series of works with a high likelihood of continuing into the next 100th anniversary.

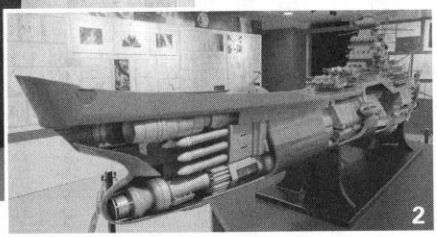
(End omitted)

Anno:

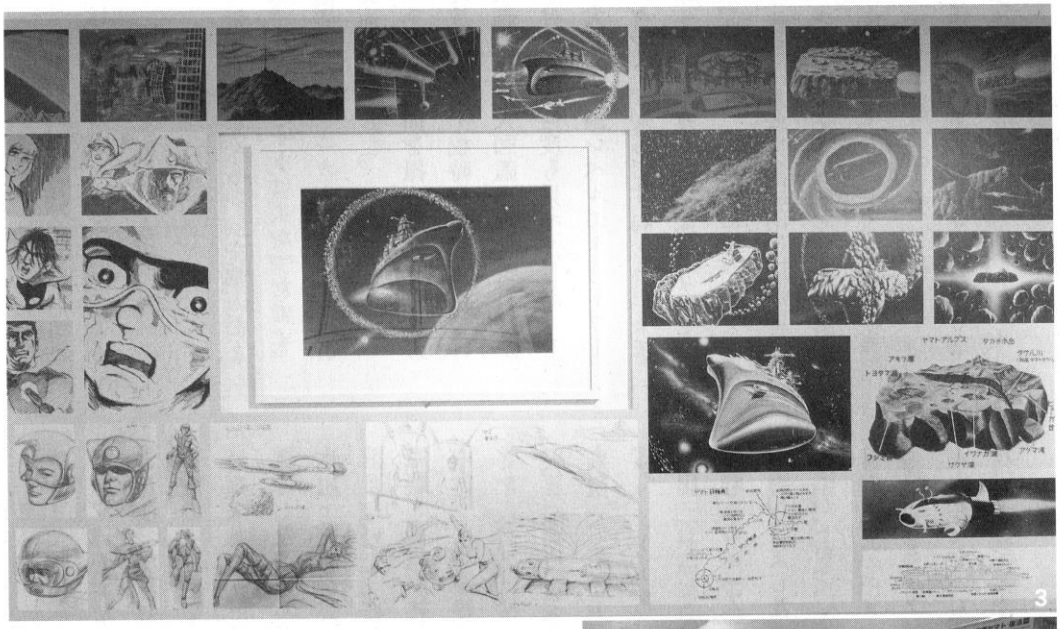
Now that I'm the one making “Yamato,” I really feel the weight of that curse,
or rather, the pressure.
It's a tremendous burden, but I'm working diligently to make an interesting work,
so please look forward to it.

(This interview was conducted on May 20, 2025.)
◇Compiled by the editorial department





1 Venue Entrance
2 Internal diagram model of Yamato
3 Numerous artworks featured in the phantom proposal document
4 Toys and merchandise from that era, such as plastic models
5 Chronological timeline space



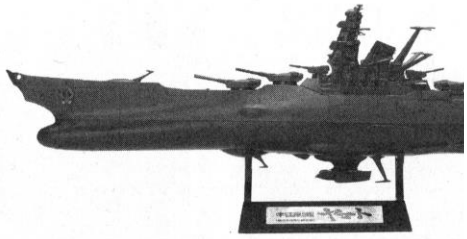
Hideaki Anno Planning & Production 50th Anniversary of Broadcast "Space Battleship Yamato Complete Record Exhibition"

July 19 to August 3, 2025 Namba Skyo 7th Floor, Osaka
Held at the Convention Hall. Over 2,000 carefully selected valuable materials, including the original proposal document, character and mechanical design drawings, original artwork, and background art, will be on display.
The exhibition features a large timeline space reflecting on the 50-year history of the Yamato series, music introductions, a large-scale Yamato model, and products from the era, offering a rich and fulfilling experience.

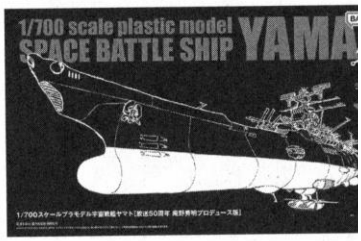
◇

主催：東北新社、著作総監修：西﨑彰司、企画：カラー／アニメ特撮アーカイブ機構（ATAC）／乃村工藝社、制作：乃村工藝社／東北新社、協賛：バンダイナムコフィルムワークス、協力：読売テレビ

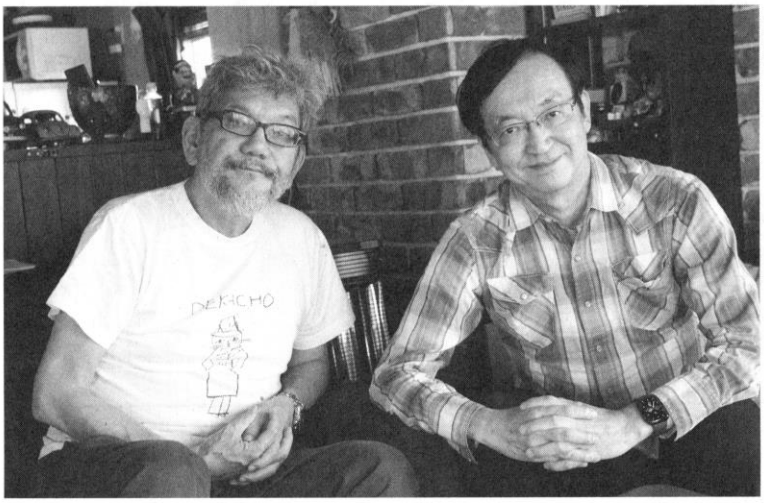
展示写真は東京会場のものです。大阪会場では展示方法が異なる場合があります。©東北新社/著作総監修 西﨑彰司



1/700 Scale Plastic Model Space Battleship
[50th Anniversary Hideaki Anno Produced E
Assembled model size: approx. 380 mm lon
mm high,included base: approx. 115 mm lo
high. Based on the TV anime's cel animatio
Hideaki Anno re-supervised the design and
molded colors.



Outer packaging features original illustrations by
Anno. Distributed by Bandai Namco Filmworks. E
the pre-order period, sales may end once the pla
ty is reached. Sales may continue after the pre-o
inventory remains. Product photos and specificat
ject to change without notice.
©Tohokushinsha/Copyright Supervision: Akira Ni



With interviewer Ryusuke Hikawa (right).

Ryusuke Hikawa

Born in Hyogo Prefecture in 1958. Anime and tokusatsu researcher. Visiting professor at Meiji University Graduate School, professor at ZEN University, vice president of the Anime and Tokusatsu Archive Organization (ATAC), a specific nonprofit corporation. He began writing for anime magazines while still in college, worked for a company, and became a freelance writer in 2001. He has served as a judge for the Mainichi Film Awards and a programming advisor for the Tokyo International Film Festival. Major works include '20th Anniversary of Zambot 3' (Ota Publishing), 'Yoshikazu Yasuhiko Animation Sketchbook: Mobile Suit Gundam,'The Innovation of Japanese Animation: Structural Analysis of the Changes That Marked a Turning Point in History, and 'Theory of Imaginary Visual Culture: From the Monster Boom to Space Battleship Yamato' (KADOKAWA).